



**Joining the Dots**  
September 2015

**Strengthening our Understanding  
of Middle Years through the MDI**

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## What we know before the Middle years

Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) is completed at school entry (Prep) every three years – 2009, 2012, 2015

In 2015, the AEDI became a census – AEDC

The 5 domains of the AEDI (AEDC) are:

- Emotional maturity
- Language & cognitive skills
- Physical health & well-being
- Social competence
- Communication skills & general knowledge

## What we know before the Middle years

### Australian Early Development Index AEDI 2009/2012

City of Whittlesea results	2009 No. (%)	2012 No. (%)
Children surveyed	2,061	2,410
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children	27 (1.3%)	29 (1.2%)
Children born in a country other than Australia	106 (5.1%)	198 (8.2%)
Children with English as a second language	376 (18.2%)	511 (21.2%)
Children who speak a language other than English at home	683 (33.1%)	826 (34.3%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proficient in English</li><li>• Not Proficient in English</li></ul>		704 (83.3%) 122 (14.4%)

## What we know before the Middle years

### Australian Early Development Index AEDI 2009/2012

AEDI Results	2009 No. (%)	2012 No. (%)
Children vulnerable on one or more AEDI domains (Victoria)	20.3%	19.5%
Children vulnerable on one or more AEDI domains (City of Whittlesea)	437 (22.8%)	481 (21.3%)
* Lalor	82 (34.9%)	60 (33.9%)
* Thomastown	65 (31.9%)	62 (30%%)
* Mernda	14 (35%)	35 (20.3%)
* Epping / Beveridge and surrounds	79 (24.1%)	114 (24.3%)

## What else do we know?

	<b>Whittlesea</b>	<b>State</b>
Youth disengagement	9.2%	7.4%
	Lalor 14.5%	
	Thomastown 12.8%	
	Epping 12%	
Adolescent eating disorders	3.9%	2.4%
Adolescent psychological distress	15.3%	13%
Percentage of 15-17 year olds drinking alcohol last month	69.8%	52.3%
15-17 year olds who have sniffed glue/chromed	17.2%	7%
15-17 year olds who smoke	28.8%	17.7%

## Research – Under 16 Reports

Due to concern for significant numbers of disengaged young people under the age of 16, with few options and supports, research projects across Northern Metropolitan Melbourne were commissioned by Youth Connections in 2012 - 2013.

### Aggregated non-attendance Years 7 to 10 In 2012

	Schools 20-40% Non-attendance	Schools 20-40% Non-attendance	Schools Uncontactable	Schools Expelled	Agencies Out of school
Banyule/ Nillumbik	Not reported	53	23	6	Not reported
Darebin	94	26	6	8	9
Hume	215	68	3	26	112
Moreland	87	47	13	7	16
Whittlesea	348	63	10	19	25
Totals	744	257	55	66	162

## Why the Middle Years Development Instrument?

- We had an absence of data about what is happening for children in the middle years before they transition to secondary school
- The AEDI had been indicating a number of children presenting as developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains
- The Under 16 Project showed that children were starting to disengage in Year 7 and recommendations stated a need for:
  - Further development of school based community hubs
  - More flexible learning options for the under 16 year olds
  - Support for strengthening transition processes
  - Increase parent consultation and engagement
  - Ongoing school /community consultation
  - Improve local data collection processes



Students' Wellbeing: Results from the Middle Years Development Instrument

# MDI School Report



Whittlesea cohort

What is the MDI?

Year 8  
(2014 cohort)

### Key Demographics

SA Year 8 cohort participation:  
Year 8 4640

Whittlesea cohort participation:  
Year 8 628

Sex: Boys 356 (57.2%)  
Girls 269 (42.8%)

### Language spoken at home:

(More than 1 language can be selected)

Aboriginal:	2	(0.3%)
English:	563	(89.1%)
Arabic:	74	(11.8%)
Cantonese:	6	(1.0%)
Greek:	33	(5.3%)
Hindi:	15	(2.4%)
Indonesian:	6	(1.0%)
Italian:	23	(3.7%)
Japanese:	2	(0.3%)
Korean:	1	(0.2%)
Mandarin:	4	(0.6%)
Vietnamese:	20	(3.2%)
Other:	121	(19.3%)

## What the MDI is?

- The MDI provides representative information on children's feelings, thoughts, assets, strengths, needs, and wishes during the middle childhood period.
- The MDI allows schools communities and school regions to examine whether their assumptions and expectations about their children's development and experiences are compatible with the children's own perceptions.
- A tool for the mobilisation and enhancement of initiatives that are sensitive to and build upon existing partnerships, resources and strengths in the schools and communities

## What the MDI is not?

- The MDI does not diagnose children with specific learning disabilities or areas of developmental delay.
- The MDI data cannot be used to prescribe specific practices or programs to teachers, parents, schools, or communities.
- The MDI does not assess the success or failure of children in the middle childhood period.
- The MDI does not identify individual children.

## What is the MDI?

The Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) is a self-reporting survey tool which

- provides information about the current life experiences, wellbeing and social connectedness of children in their middle years, and
- reports on five dimensions that are critical components of development and strongly linked to wellbeing, health, academic achievement, and success throughout the school and in later life:
  1. Social and Emotional Development
  2. Connectedness
  3. School Experiences
  4. Physical Health and Wellbeing
  5. Constructive Use of After School Time

## How was the MDI conducted in Whittlesea?

- Endorsement by Whittlesea Youth Commitment (WYC) and the Whittlesea Early Years Partnership (WEYP) that this was a key priority
- Consultation with DEECD and research approval/ethics
- Sought champions within the Whittlesea School Principal Network to assist with the uptake of the initial survey round
- Promoted the opportunity for all schools to participate
- City of Whittlesea covered the cost associated with the MDI; WYC supported the process

## How was the MDI conducted in Whittlesea?

- In 2013, the survey was completed by Grade 5 students in 18 government primary schools with a total of 936 students
- In 2014, Year 8 students completed the surveys in 6 secondary schools (5 government and 1 independent) with a total of 628 students
- In 2015, approximately 2000 students from Years 5, 6, 7 and 8 (14 schools - 9 primary, 4 secondary and 1 combined school)

# Strengthening Connections with the Middle Years

April 2015

## Launch of the 2014 MDI Municipal Report

**John Fry**  
Chair - Hume Whittlesea Local Learning & Employment Network  
Chair - Whittlesea Youth Commitment



Hume Whittlesea Local Learning and Employment Network

**Partnerships** Links  
**Community** Pride  
**People** Choices  
**Diversity** Pathways  
**Brave** Solutions  
**Local**  
Knowledge  
**Creative**



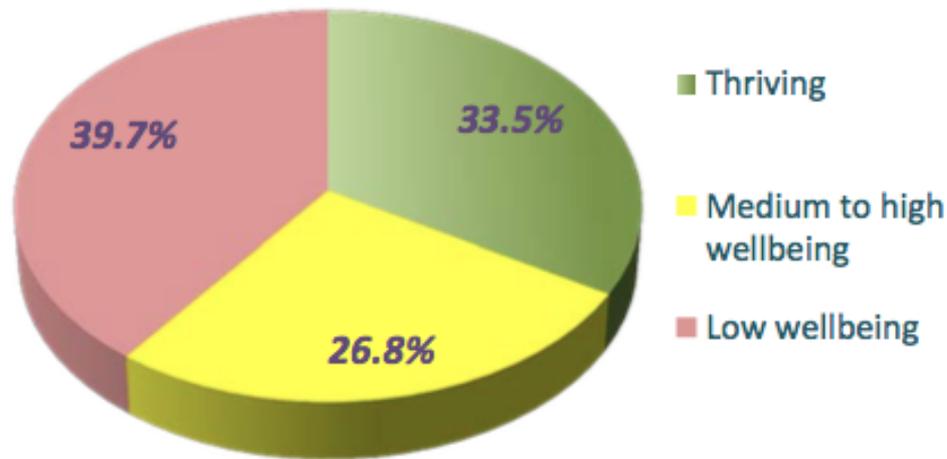
Whittlesea  
**Youth**  
Commitment

Linking Young People  
with Education,  
Employment  
& Training

# 2014 MDI Whittlesea Report

## Overall Assets and Wellbeing Reported

### *MDI Wellbeing Index*



The wellbeing index is a composite score of 5 measures: Optimism, Happiness, Self-esteem, General Health and (absence of) Sadness.

**Thriving** indicates the proportion of children who had high scores on at least 4 dimensions of wellbeing.

**Medium-high** wellbeing indicates the proportion of children who had no low scores, but less than 4 high scores.

**Low wellbeing** indicates the proportion of children who had at least 1 low score on any of the 5 dimensions.

# MDI Whittlesea

## Overall Assets & Wellbeing Index Data

	Grade 5 2013	Year 8 2014
Thriving	47%	33.5%
Medium to High	25%	26.8%
Low	28%	39.7%

## Presence of Assets

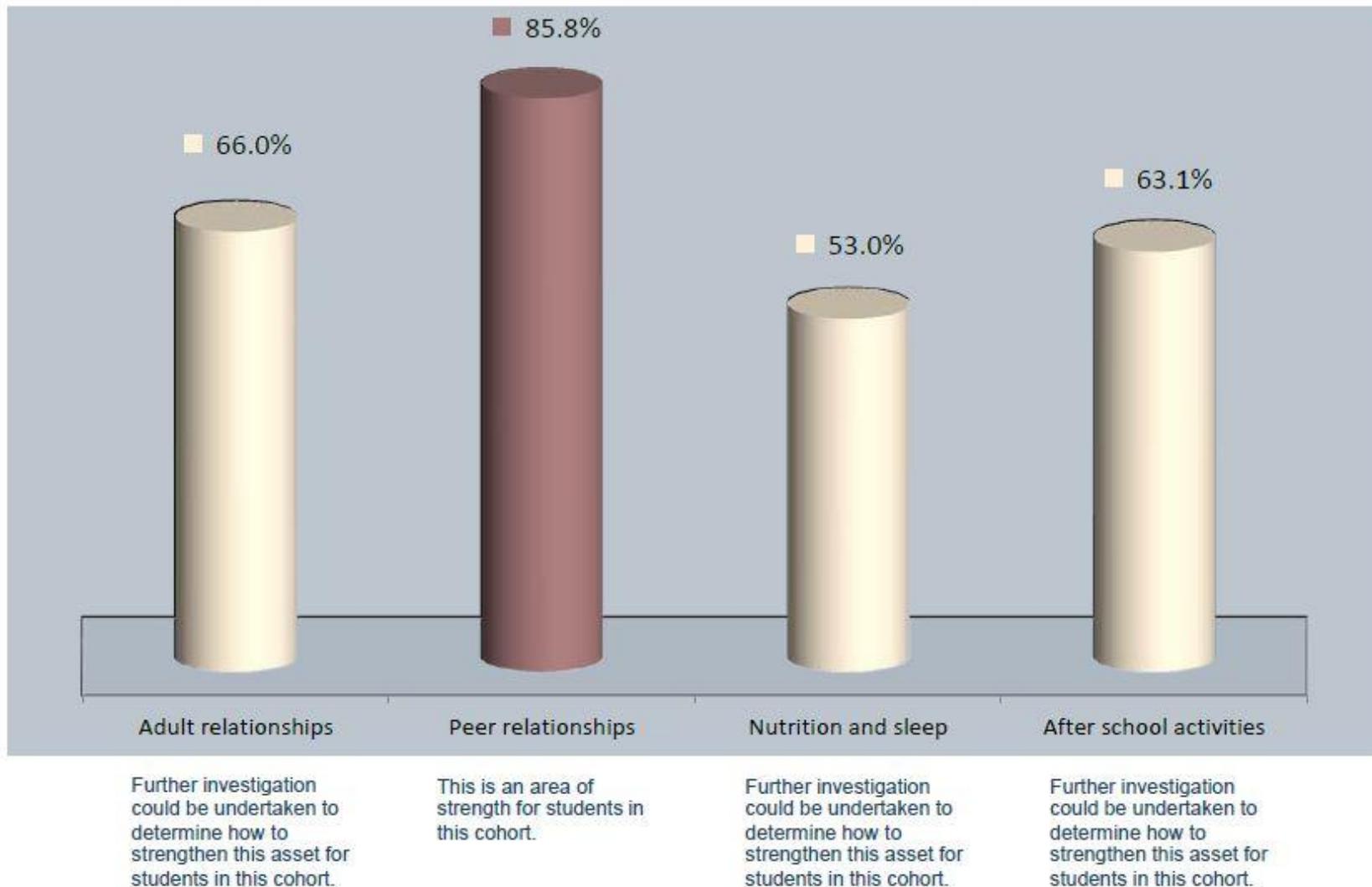


Figure 3: Presence of assets reported among the students in this cohort



## Domain 5: Constructive Use of After School Time

### Music & Arts

- Q68b During the last week after school, how many days did you participate in **art or music lessons**?
- Q69h During the last week after school, how many days did you **practice a musical instrument**?
- Q69i During the last week after school, how many days did you **do arts & crafts**?
- 

### Sports

- Q68d During the last week after school, how many days did you participate in **individual sports with a coach or instructor**?
- Q68e During the last week after school, how many days did you participate in **team sports with a coach or instructor**?
- Q69a During the last week after school, how many days did you **do sports and/or exercise for fun**?
- 

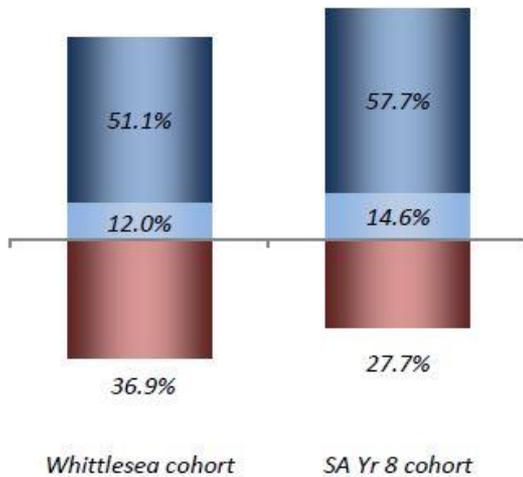
### Organised Activities

- Q68a During the last week after school, how many days did you participate in **educational lessons or activities**?
- Q68b During the last week after school, how many days did you participate in **art or music lessons**?
- Q68c During the last week after school, how many days did you participate in **youth organisations**?
- Q68d During the last week after school, how many days did you participate in **individual sports with a coach or instructor**?
- Q68e During the last week after school, how many days did you participate in **team sports with a coach or instructor**?

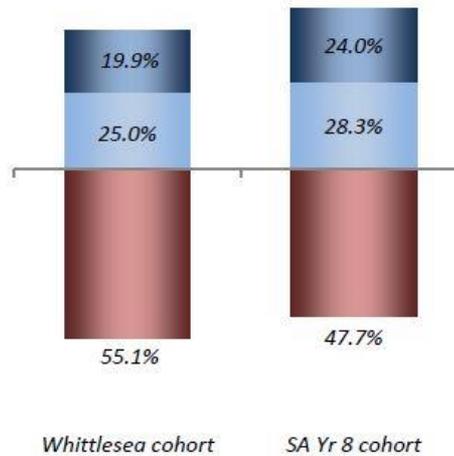
# Domain 5: Constructive Use of After School Time

Year 8 2014

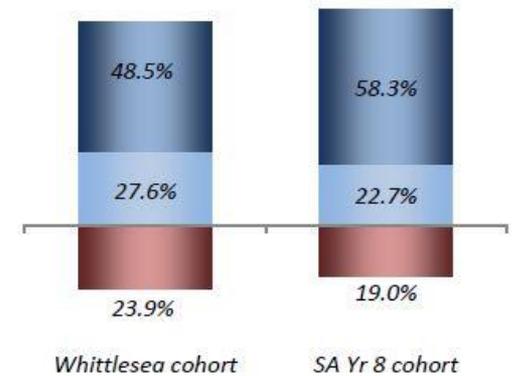
## Organised Activities



## Music & Arts

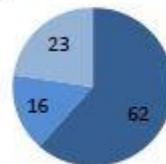


## Sports



Grade 5 2013

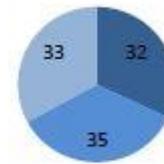
### Any Organised Activity



### Sports



### Music & Arts



2+ times per week
  Once per week
  Not at all

## Key differences between Grade 5 (2013) and Year 8 (2014) MDI Reports

- Decrease in self esteem (82% to 66.1%)
- Decrease in perseverance (44% to 29.2%)
- No 'important adult at school' increases (33% to 79.4%)
- Decrease in Academic Self-Concept (85% to 70.5%)
- Decrease in school climate (65% to 26.4%)
- Decrease in school belonging (70% to 38.2%)
- Decrease in frequently eating breakfast (83% to 60.2%)
- Decrease in frequently getting a good night's sleep (70% to 52.3%)
- Increase in the number who never do homework (7% to 15.4%)
- Increase in the number who watch TV for more than 2 hours a day (17% to 29.1%)
- Increase in the number who use video games/computer for more than 2 hours a day (14% to 32.2%)

# Using MDI @ Epping SC



- Our Results
- Response at ESC
- Using MDI results in other communities



# Setting the scene: ESC is...

- Northern Suburbs School
- Epping = 38<sup>th</sup> percentile socio-economic disadvantage (2012)
- Growing rapidly (currently 1020 students, 140+ in 2016)
- Good reputation in the community
- Strong wellbeing component



# Our results by comparison...

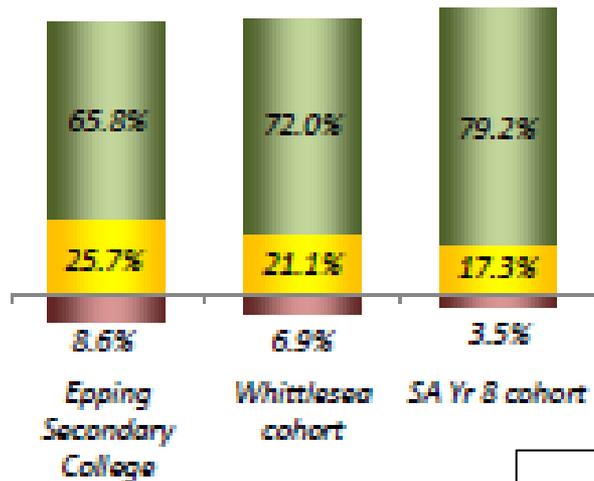
ESC did well in	ESC did poorly in
Happiness	Empathy
Bullying (lack of)	Breakfast
Prosocial Behaviour	After school time
Connectedness to Adults	Having an 'Important Adult' (17.9% 'Yes')
'Worries' – anxiety (lack of)	

**\* Year 8, 2014 only**

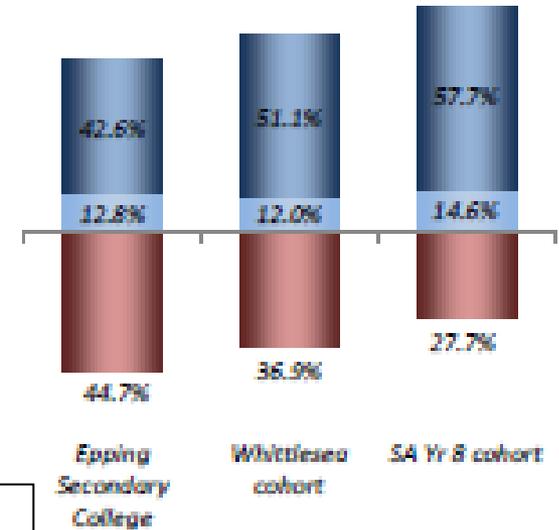


# How could your school use MDI data?

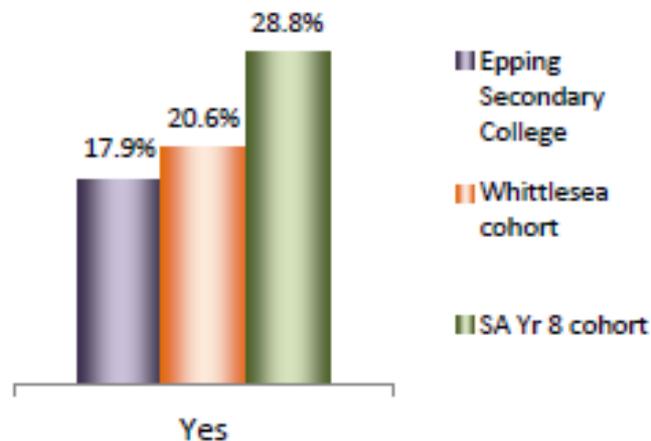
## Empathy



## Organised Activities



## Important adults in school



# Response @ ESC

Tempting to put programs in place immediately, BUT:

- MDI is not a diagnostic tool
- One year level in one year not a basis for major change
- Whole community response required

SO.....



# Response @ ESC continued...

- Testing sought for Year 7-9
  - Comparative long-term data needed
  - Wellbeing measurement tool (quantitative)
- Compared with other forms of analysis
  - Attitudes to school survey
  - Other wellbeing tests (positive psychology)
- Certain programmatic responses prepared for future implementation



# Response @ ESC continued...

- Planning regarding other responses
  - Positive Education to be used as a vehicle



# Using MDI in other communities

- Quantitative data helpful for tackling the supposed 'airy-fairy-ness' of wellbeing





## How is the MDI data to be used? - Schools

- Use data as evidence for supporting funding submissions
- Sharing with staff and discussing and unpacking the results
- Use data as conversation starters and discussion topics for teachers to have with students
- Helps with planning: health and well-being can be incorporated in more start up programs
- Use data as a tool for engaging and communicating with parents
- One school stated they had introduced an 'educational online tool' promoting connections / relationships. This tool connects parents/teachers/students rather than Facebook
- Using data as apart of a school review and self evaluation which will then feed into the school's strategic plan.
- To initiate a peer support program.

## How is the MDI data to be used? - Schools

The following are examples of actual responses to MDI data at the 2015 MDI Whittlesea Forum:

- Revisited the Attitudes to School survey to compare with MDI data and explored further with staff
- Set up breakfast club
- Provided support for parents through parent workshops and a parent skills register
- Introduce Pos Ed (Positive Education) program exploring optimism
- Ran focus groups to further explore some of the results
- Led us to discover issues relating to kids not attending activities / services, eg, timing of activities, problems with transport, isolation of families, clashes with other activities. This information helps to plan within the school and with community groups about how to better organise activities that are accessible for our students.

## How is the MDI data to be used? - Schools

### **Engage and involve students:**

- Use the MDI survey as a conversation starter with the students to unpack the data and explore what improvements can be made
- Conduct focus groups on key issues such as engagement and relevance
- Provide opportunities for young people to identify and lead activities and programs for their peers

### **Engage and involve parents and families**

- Inform parents more on transition and the role they play
- Engage parents through a skills register
- Conduct parent workshops and/or forums
- Support vulnerable families who have limited knowledge of how to/ability to engage with the school

## How is the MDI data to be used? - Schools

- The data proved to be most useful when comparing the 2013 year 5 data to the 2014 year 8 data.
- Data has been used to inform school communities, through a range of PD session.
- The data has been used to introduce specific programs aimed to target indicators shown in the survey eg:
  - nutrition session
  - Running Mpower girls group
  - RAGE classes for boys
- This data has been particularly useful for Secondary College nurses as they are able to aim health promotions with MDI findings.
- Targeted PD sessions for school communities.
- Finding common areas of need and working together to address this means that all students and families in our local area benefit.

# Schools and Community



# How is the MDI data to be used? – Schools & Community

## **Further initiatives/programs discussed at the 2015 MDI Forum:**

- Transition programs with feeder schools, including multiple visits from primary students to secondary school(s)
- Support groups
- Transport to activities
- Family Engagement Officer 1 day per week to target prep parents for coffee/conversation etc.
- Local teacher coaching team to develop relationships outside the classroom which can be taken back into the classroom.

# Developing partnership programs



## What now?

### **Future initiatives and planning:**

- Development of a municipal Middle Years Strategy for the City of Whittlesea
- Formation of a Middle Years Reference Group
- MDI 2015 for primary and secondary schools
- Parent engagement workshops \_ *Teens and Transitions* with Angie Wilcock
- Staff PD sessions with Angie Wilcock

# Developing a Middle Years Strategy



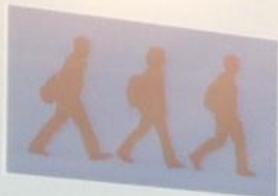
## Middle Years Reference Group

This group will provide advice and guidance to support the development of a Middle Years Strategy for the City of Whittlesea, updating, consulting and maintaining links with existing early years (WEYP), youth (WYC), service (WCF) partnerships and other networks (e.g. Transition Network).

The Middle Year Reference Group will help shape a community-driven municipal-wide strategy and they will commit to supporting its rollout/implementation.

Membership - City of Whittlesea and LLEN staff, school representatives, service/organisation representatives and possible parent representation.

# The Middle Years.....



.....Change and Challenge

Whittlesea – Middle

## Middle Years Workshops

- **School Staff**
- **Parent Engagement**



## Interest from local government and community groups

Development of local government strategies, eg  
Community Safety & Crime Prevention, Life Long  
Learning

Public libraries – program development

YMCA, Scouts Victoria, sporting groups, art & music  
groups – use of after school time

Other educational providers

Questions ?

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